

Name: _____

The Farmer's Friend

By Guy Belleranti

I'm thinking of an animal. It has no arms. It has no legs. It has no teeth. It has no eyes and no ears. It has no nose. It has no lungs and no bones. What is it? It's an earthworm!



While an earthworm seems to be missing many common body parts that other animals have, they do have complex bodies.

Even without arms and legs, earthworms have the ability to move around underground. First, it uses tiny bristles (called setae) to grip the soil. Second, it uses sets of muscles to shorten or lengthen its segmented body as it burrows forward and sometimes even backward.

How many segments does an earthworm's body have? Its body can be divided into 150! The mouth is in the first segment. It eats as it burrows, pulling dirt and decaying plant matter into the mouth. This burrowing turns and aerates the soil.

Because an earthworm has no teeth, it doesn't chew food. Instead, the food moves into a gizzard which grinds it up with the help of tiny stones in the already swallowed dirt. The food then moves into a long intestine. Food that can't be digested goes out as castings or "worm poop." The castings are rich in nutrients. These nutrients are great fertilizer, which brings smiles to farmers and gardeners.

While an earthworm has no eyes or ears, it does have five hearts and a simple brain. The hearts pump blood around the body. The brain connects with nerve cells that detect light, the vibrations of other animals, and even some tastes.

But how can an earthworm breathe without a nose and lungs? It breathes through its skin! An earthworm keeps its skin moist with a slimy substance called mucus. If the earthworm dries out it can't capture oxygen and will die. That's why it usually stays underground. However, after dark on a humid evening or after a late-day rain, earthworms sometimes come to the surface. That's when fishermen search for big earthworms, called night crawlers, to use as bait.

Name: _____

The Farmer's Friend

By Guy Belleranti



1. Circle the body parts that an earthworm has.
Cross out the body parts that an earthworm does not have.

nose	skin	eyes	teeth	lungs	gizzard
hearts	brain	ears	mouth	intestine	muscles

2. Name two things mentioned in the article that are eaten by earthworms.

3. Why do earthworms die if their skin dries out?

4. When would you be most likely to see an earthworm in the grass?

- a. in the afternoon, just before a rainstorm
- b. at night, after the lawn has been watered with a sprinkler
- c. in the evening, on a hot, dry summer day
- d. during the hottest part of the day, when there is less water in the soil

Explain why you chose the answer above.

Name: _____

The Farmer's Friend

By Guy Belleranti

The scrambled words below are vocabulary words from the article. Unscramble each word and write it on the line. Please be sure each word is spelled correctly.



1. _____

r w r o b u s

hint: digs a tunnel through the ground

2. _____

g d z a z i r

hint: muscular stomach for grinding food

3. _____

e n t r i n u t s

hint: substances found in food that provide nourishment

4. _____

u r p e t c a

hint: catch or take

5. _____

g e x n o y

hint: type of air that life on land needs to breathe

6. _____

m i h u d

hint: having lots of water vapor in the air

7. _____

c r f a s e u

hint: to rise to the top

ANSWER KEY

The Farmer's Friend

By Guy Belleranti



1. Circle the body parts that an earthworm has.
Cross out the body parts that an earthworm does not have.

nose	skin	eyes	teeth	lungs	gizzard
hearts	brain	ears	mouth	intestine	muscles

2. Name two things mentioned in the article that are eaten by earthworms.

soil and decaying plant matter

3. Why do earthworms die if their skin dries out?

It has mucus on its skin that helps it capture oxygen. If the mucus dries up, the worm can't breathe.

4. When would you be most likely to see an earthworm in the grass?

- a. in the afternoon, just before a rainstorm
- b. at night, after the lawn has been watered with a sprinkler
- c. in the evening, on a hot, dry summer day
- d. during the hottest part of the day, when there is less water in the soil

Explain why you chose the answer above.

The article says that worms surface after a late-day rain. A sprinkler would simulate the wet underground environment created by a rainstorm.

ANSWER KEY

The Farmer's Friend

By Guy Belleranti

The scrambled words below are vocabulary words from the article. Unscramble each word and write it on the line. Please be sure each word is spelled correctly.



1. **burrows** r w r o b u s
hint: digs a tunnel through the ground

2. **gizzard** g d z a z i r
hint: muscular stomach for grinding food

3. **nutrients** e n t r i n u t s
hint: substances found in food that provide nourishment

4. **capture** u r p e t c a
hint: catch or take

5. **oxygen** g e x n o y
hint: type of air that life on land needs to breathe

6. **humid** m i h u d
hint: having lots of water vapor in the air

7. **surface** c r f a s e u
hint: to rise to the top